

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Today, Congressman Sanford Bishop argued for the inclusion of his "Healthy Troops" Act as an amendment to the Defense Authorization Bill (H.R. 4200). Introduced last week as H.R. 4346, the Healthy Troops Amendment would require the Department of Defense (DoD) to conduct comprehensive hands-on physicals on all U.S. service members before and after they are deployed.

A 1997 law requires DoD to perform pre- and post- deployment medical exams to determine a service member's fitness for combat and any health conditions that result from deployment. To comply with this mandate, the DoD is currently replacing a comprehensive medical exam with self-administered surveys.

"Relying on an individual's ability to self diagnose, surveys alone do not provide an accurate picture of our troops' health," said Congressman Bishop. "Without an accurate picture we are endangering both the lives of our men and women in the field as well as their ability to apply for benefits when they get home."

The 1997 law was passed after many veterans of Operation Desert Storm were denied disability claims for what has become known as "Gulf War Syndrome." Without pre- and post-war documentation it was impossible for veterans of the first Gulf War to prove that their deployment had in fact caused their symptoms. Without verification that symptoms are war-related, claims for medical compensation are denied.

If the Rule's Committee approves Congressman Bishop's request, the Healthy Troops Amendment will move to the House floor for a vote on its inclusion in H.R. 4200.